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Area Analysis for Trail Cr. Canyon:

A methodology for examining multiple activities and resource issues and opportunities.

Submitted in fulfillment of the
Outdoor Recreation Management
Short Course

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Abstract

In certain areas of the Sawtooth National Forest, the prescribed Standards and Guides of the Land and Resource Management Plan (LMP) provide for a range of possible solutions to achieve the Desired Future Conditions. In Trail Creek Canyon, this range of opportunities and the increasing recreation activity suggest the need to plan in detail for future management. Involving and understanding the public market is imperative. A process, to be known as Area Analysis, is needed to further analyze the existing directives of the LMP and to document an appropriate mixture of proposed developments, adjustments in uses and restorations of impacted resources.

Keywords

Area analysis
Desired Future Condition
Marketing
Implementation (of L.M.P.)

Introduction

In the beginning, the project in Trail Creek appeared to be a question of resolving the ever increasing demand for recreation opportunities in an acknowledged sensitive riparian ecosystem. The intent was to examine the existing recreation facilities and concentrated dispersed use areas, to assess the impacts occurring in the riparian community and determine where site improvements and restorations could be of benefit to both the recreating public and the basic resource. However, our earliest discussions made it clear that more resource concerns were at stake and that the public recreationists and residents of the Ketchum-Sun Valley community must be included in any formulation of a detailed prescription of how to achieve the Desired Future Condition.

Our project has expanded greatly since originally conceived. No longer is it merely a plan to provide functional satisfaction for two concurrent resources; the recreation use vs. riparian habitat protection question. The task has expanded to include a more in-depth analysis of the resources and management issues which initiated the Standards and Guides prescribed in the Sawtooth National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. The process we propose is becoming known as Area Analysis(1). However, little has been documented as a proven method for completing this work. At this time, the intent of this paper is to describe such a method and to initiate a test of its workability in Trail Creek Canyon. We expect that it will help us:

1. Determine areas and sites of opportunity as well as conflict between the various use activities and the resource base.
2. Determine/propose a mixture of uses and activities which can be accommodated in the canyon.
3. Develop a series of project prospecti for involving the local users and cooperators as partners in facilitating the use and management of Trail Creek Canyon.

Process Overview

In September 1987, the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Sawtooth Nation Forest was completed. It established a series of Standards and Guides which are the means to accomplishing the Desired Future Conditions for the Management Areas defined in the Plan. These Standards and Guides and the other decisions of the Plan are not subject to re-evaluation at this time but are the beginning point for the Area Analysis Process. An accurate and detailed recapitulation of the directives of the Forest Plan is necessary to determine where the boundary of the Study Area should be set. The emphasis in this effort is to define where the mixture of resource and management issues is complex enough to warrant further clarifying activities.

When the area has been defined and the decision to proceed has been made, two concurrent efforts may begin. The first is to determine what role the public will play and the other is to describe the resource attributes in question and the need for change in the manage-

ment of the resources. Within the scope of the Standards and Guides, alternative management prescriptions can be formulated which address the identified Needs for Change and the attributes of the resources. These Alternatives are best displayed when mapped layouts are combined with narrative descriptions. Assessments of cumulative effects help to determine the most appropriate Alternative or may suggest the formulation of yet another Alternative. At this point, the Area Analysis is complete. It allows for the formulation of a recommendation for review and decision-making as prescribed by NEPA. After review and comment by the public, a decision can be made to adopt a specific set of management activities to implement the Standards and Guides of the Forest Plan. Programming for out-year budgets and project implementation may begin. The included chart displays the flow of the process and the following discussions provide insight into each of the process steps.

Examination of the LMP - Desired Future Conditions, Standards and Guides

The Forest Plan has defined areas (Management Areas) of the Forest which are to be managed to provide for a prescribed Desired Future Condition. Certain resource attributes and outputs are preferred and will receive emphasis in management decisions. Often more than one emphasized element is present in a situation which requires both be optimized. At other times, the emphases will have no conflict. Examination of the Standards and Guides for a Management Area is therefore necessary to determine not only what issues should be addressed but also where on the land these overlying configurations apply. Areas which have a significant number of competing issues or issues which are of concern to the public should be included in the study area. In the Trail Creek area, the rapidly expanding dispersed recreation use is conflicting or competing with the riparian and wildlife habitats and grazing management.

Delineating the Management Area boundaries and highlighting the key directives and constraints helps in understanding the areas in question. It is not appropriate to consider the validity of the established direction at this time. Understanding the management direction is the essential consideration.

Defining the Analysis Area Boundary

After reviewing the Desired Future Condition and Standards and Guides for each of the Management Areas in consideration a boundary may be declared for the analysis. Considerations for locating the boundary should include:

1. Does the area have a visually identifiable limit which is easy to relate to in discussion or which functions well in the present mixture of uses such as drainage boundaries, ridges or other natural features?

2. The area must be relevant to the set of issues, concerns and opportunities but should not be so large as to compete with the scale of the Forest Plan itself.

3. In some cases the analysis may be focusing on the details of one specific management prescription and therefore the Management Area boundary may be appropriate.

4. Examination of resource data or input from the public may suggest that a refinement of the boundary is in order. Nothing says it cannot be changed to suit the circumstance.

Marketing and Public Involvement

In the development of Alternative Solutions it will be both necessary and useful to understand the needs, desires and concerns of the public who will be affected by the decisions to be made. How and when the public is involved can have a great effect on the analysis. Marketing is a relevant consideration early in the area analysis process for the simple reason that satisfying the public need within the scope of the existing Standards and Guides is a large part of why we undertake to plan or examine our means of reaching the Desired Future Condition. Marketing may take the form of a comprehensive research of user data or may be more subtly employed by becoming involved first hand with the user groups to determine their needs and concerns. Even for small areas an understanding of who our market includes at the broadest scale must precede identification of the market segments which we will ultimately seek to satisfy.(2.) A comprehensive study of the recreation market has been developed by the University of Idaho and can provide details about who our market includes. Discussions with other suppliers of recreation opportunities and services in the immediate area can help to narrow the field and identify specific groups we will want to include. Determining who represents the targeted market segments and involving them in our early planning discussions has proven to be an effective way of developing management alternatives which meet the public need. Early involvement allows us to present our process and identify the factors we believe should be considered but maintain the public trust that a final outcome has not been determined.

Resource Status and the Need For Change

The basic reason for doing an area analysis is to determine the sequence of management activities which will take place in moving from the current situation to the Desired Future Condition. Identification of the existing resource conditions and the need to change certain aspects of these resources is the framework for decision making. Resource specialists have inventoried and described most all aspects of the basic land resources and have often identified the need to correct unacceptable conditions. Usually these data have only been displayed one resource at a time and without specific actions identified for improvement of unsatisfactory conditions.

The Northern Region of the Forest Service has described a process for identifying resource opportunities, management concerns and known public issues(3.). It focuses on mapping the specific sites of these opportunities, concerns and issues and describing them verbally. Whether mapped by hand in typical overlays or with the aid of a sophisticated computer G.I.S. display, the cumulative assessment of opportunities and problem sites is essential. An important criteria to remember is that the Forest Plan has already described a Desired Future situation (Condition). The discussion of Need for Change should address only what is required to reach this desired condition; not propose a redefinition of the future.

A complete set of overlays should be prepared to consistently display the status of each resource and its need for change and to present the opportunities to accommodate various

activities which are included in the Desired Future Condition. Having these available as public information can benefit the early discussions with our market representatives.

Analysis of Inputs and Formulation of Alternatives

Focusing on the established Desired Future Condition, an Interdisciplinary Team made up of the specialists who have assembled the resource data must now address the Need For Change in each affected resource and formulate a series of workable management alternatives. Included in this series must be consideration of the present management situation as if it were to continue without alteration and at least two other plausible combinations of management activities which could achieve the Desired Future Conditions prescribed in the Forest Plan. The specific activities in each alternative must be described in such detail as to allow for the site specific determination of effects. Mapping these alternatives will provide the opportunity to compare them with the resource data and to deal with the competition for use of specific sites.

Assessment of Cumulative Effects

For each of the Alternatives, the Interdisciplinary Team must determine the cumulative effect of the proposed management activities. In some cases it may be necessary to visit field locations to gather site specific resource data or to better understand elements of the proposal. The specialist should determine what ,if any, mitigative measures should be included in the proposal and whether or not the effect on the resource will meet the Standards and Guides established in the Forest Plan and successfully contribute to achievement of the Desired Future Condition.

Each Alternative should be documented with an accurate map accompanied by detailed narratives describing the cumulative effects, mitigations, and findings. The Area Analysis process is complete at this point and the data may now be used to select a recommended Alternative for decision.

Selection of the Recommended Alternative

Based on the findings of the Cumulative Effects Assessment, the Team should recommend either one of the proposed Alternatives or assemble portions of those Alternatives to create a Recommended Alternative for the Line Officer's decision. This Alternative should ideally provide the best solution to satisfy the greatest number of Needs For Change, be sensitive to the identified public issues, and achieve the optimum of Desired Future Conditions. In reality, it will be a masterful compromise. It must describe the specifics of each management activity so completely that project designs can proceed and be reasonably assured that each will achieve their respective share of the Desired Future Condition and contribute the anticipated effects on the resources.

Relationship to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969

A concern throughout the development of this process has been the relationship of Area Analysis to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The Area Analysis process is not intended to reevaluate the decisions made by the Forest Land and Resource Management Plan nor to produce any decision regarding the management of the area being examined. Its function is to collectively examine the existing decisions, directives, management standards and guidelines for a specific resource setting, assess the cumulative effect of alternative schemes to meet the Desired Future Condition and recommend a course of actions which may then collectively or individually be decided within the prescribed context of NEPA. It should not be seen as an additional level of planning or decisionmaking but rather a means to evaluate resource management activities before making a decision.

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(Prospectus as originally submitted)

Managing Recreation Opportunity and Activity in Trail Creek Canyon ...

A Guide to Implementation of the Sawtooth National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan

Submitted in fulfillment of the
Outdoor Recreation Short Course
Clemson University

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The Audience

In preparing this guide it is necessary to recognize who will be using the information and what their interest will likely be. As a guide to management based in the decisions and directives of the Sawtooth National Forest Land and Resources Management Plan(LMP), the most frequent users will be the District Ranger and Staff of the Ketchum Ranger District. Additionally, cooperating agencies, such as the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the Blaine County Recreation District, the Sun Valley Company, Ketchum City, Sun Valley City, the Ketchum-Sun Valley Chamber of Commerce, and various user groups and interested private individuals will participate in making specific management decisions and implementing project activities.

The Issue(s)

The LMP established several Management Areas within Trail Creek Canyon. Some of the management directions for these areas have potential conflicts with one another and with the present patterns of use. Understanding the integrated requirements is the key to solving the management mix in this canyon. Of critical importance is the mixture of recreation use in the riparian habitat areas and in the flood plain of Trail Cr.

The Goal

Through detailed examination of the resource base, site and activity preferences and habitat requirements; I plan to prepare a detailed guide to implementation of the decisions in the LMP with the emphasis on identifying a sequence of recreation developments, restorations, habitat improvements and alterations.

The Objectives

1. Determine areas and sites of opportunity as well as conflict between the recreation use and the resource base.

2. Determine/Propose a mixture of uses and activities which can be accommodated in the canyon.

3. Develop a series of project prospecti for involving the local users and cooperators as partners in facilitating the use and management of Trail Creek Canyon.